

obsessed by hell, or that believers were motivated to godly living either by a fear of eternal torment or eternal extinction" (p. 223), this is somewhat an exaggeration especially when he states that this is "totally wrong" since it was the consequence of those who believed in eternal punishment that made them be "obsessed by hell." Perhaps a more precise way to put it would be to say that the main Puritan idea about the world to come was a "future reward of the saints" (as shown in p. 224) instead of stating that being "obsessed by hell" was "totally wrong." Altogether, Ball connects Puritan doctrines with Adventism. I highly recommend this book to libraries of Adventist colleges and universities and those who want to know further about the connections between Puritan and Adventist theology.

Donny Chrissutianto

Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, PHILIPPINES

A Message from the Great King: Reading Malachi in Light of Ancient Persian Royal Messenger Texts from the Time of Xerxes, by R. Michael Fox. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2015. 170 pp. + 10 pp. index. ISBN 978-1-57506-394-2. Hardcover, US\$49.50.

R. Michael Fox teaches Old Testament courses at Ecclesia College and edits *Reverberation of the Exodus in Scripture*. His book, *A Message from the Great King: Reading Malachi in Light of Ancient Persian Royal Messenger Texts from the Time of Xerxes*, offers a new way of reading Malachi using the "messenger lens" as an interpretative framework in his book. He argues that Malachi contains messenger language that has its root metaphor that accompanies each periscope. Some messenger metaphors are "brilliant," obvious in texts like Mal 1:1; 2:7; 3:1; 1:14; 3:16, 17; however, some are only "bright," which for him means that they are hardly dull, for instance (בְּיַד), "by the hand of" in Mal 1:1; (פְּקִידָה) "governor" in Mal 1:8; and other words from Mal 1:11, 14; 3:1; and 4:5 and some are decorated "subtly" like in Mal 1:2-5 concerning the announcement of Edom's destruction, the father and king metaphors, and others. In those passages, the messenger language is not clear. He therefore emphasizes the need to use the messenger lens to recognize them.

When he uses the messenger lens, he refers to the historical context from which Malachi was written. He offered examples such as the use of

“father” in Mal 1:6 and 2:10. He correlates this with the well-known view that during Malachi’s time, Cyrus was called “father” as well. With regard to the announcement of Edom’s desolation, he correlates it with the announcement of victory made by royal messengers from Persia. In short, what he says is that Malachi was written not in a vacuum, but in a rich Persian context. For this reason he calls Malachi a “Royal Message” through “royal messengers.” This messenger lens, inspired by the Michael Ward model, was inspired by the Narnia of C. S. Lewis, which he similarly reads through a christological lens. Fox gathers insights from “literary theory through historical reconstruction, and a close reading of the biblical text” (back page).

This book is a must for students in biblical studies. Fox demonstrates the importance of knowing the historical context in dealing with the passage. The ability to read Malachi as a royal message brings fresh relevance to the biblical text. The ability to know, respect, and revere the royal message and messengers during this Persian period of time leads the reader to have the same attitude in dealing with Malachi. He also confirms that Mal 3:1 is the apex of all the messenger language. Nevertheless, there are weak points in the book. For example, he dismisses Malachi as merely disputation, discussion, and covenant lawsuit as part of this “royal message” model. However, he mentions the covenant overtones in Malachi several times. Such a model should be presented without diminishing other existing models since the book is obviously complex. Another weak point is that Fox fails to show what a royal message looks like, although he made some passing references. A portion of the book seems somewhat contrived such as when he forces certain texts to fit within this messenger framework. For example, he quotes Herodotus describing Xerxes as someone who cared for “land’s flora and brought agricultural prosperity to the empire” (p. 104) to see the correlation between God as “the gardener king” in Mal 3:8-12. Does this mean that Malachi wrote having covenantal knowledge about God and His people rather than displaying a “messenger *poiema*?” Sound theological implications use this model that “YHWH is more than the covenant God: YHWH is the king, the sovereign, the universal emperor, and the head of the imperial army” (p. 131). His overall thesis that Malachi exhibits a root metaphor during the reign of Xerxes in the early fifth century BCE is convincing.

Petronio M. Genebago

Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, PHILIPPINES
